

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



SEP 13 1921

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES  
COOPERATING



STATES RELATIONS SERVICE  
OFFICE OF EXTENSION WORK NORTH AND WEST  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

## THIS LOOKS GOOD

THE FARMING BUSINESS.

"WE LEARN TO DO BY DOING".

During the past two years special emphasis has been placed by county agents on the development of cooperative and other business organizations among farmers. This is a proper and necessary part of extension effort and was clearly contemplated by the Smith-Lever Extension Act. Its present importance is due to an awakened business consciousness among farmers due to unusual economic conditions. Its effect is likely to be permanent or transitory, dependent upon the farmer's ability and willingness to manage these new associations, and his personal interest in the business operations.

Before encouraging organizations of local cooperatives, the county agents should be sure there is a sufficient volume of business to warrant overhead costs. There are necessary overhead functions and middlemen functions that must be preformed in connection with almost every business transaction. The question is, can the farmers more profitably perform these either individually or collectively than can the regular trade organization existing for this purpose. It is economically unsound and politically unwise for a public agency to manage business for the profit of a private individual or organization.

The county agents, who in their enthusiasm to help actually transact the farmer's business, no matter how simple or incidental, are wronging the farming industry in that they are laying an almost sure basis for failure. If the farmer cannot or is unwilling to attend to simple matters of writing letters, sending telegrams, securing quotations of prices, etc. making orders, receiving and delivering goods, how can he be expected to successfully cope with the complicated problems of management? It is easy for the county agent to accommodate the farmer by attending to seemingly trivial details in connection with business operations, but in so doing he is violating the very first principles of teaching - to lead from the simple to the complex - to inspire confidence by giving responsibility - to show how but not to do. A county agent is also by such procedure laying an almost sure basis for his own discouragement and failure as an extension teacher, as the following experience of an Illinois county agent will show:

Many counties in Southern Illinois and in the livestock feeding

section in the northern and central part of the State have shipped in considerable quantities of corn and other feeds. Owing to rapidly declining prices considerable difficulty has been encountered, in some cases even financial losses have been sustained, before the goods could be disposed of. One county agent who ordered several carloads of corn reports as follows:

"Unfortunately the price declined sharply about the time the corn was delivered and many farmers made other arrangements about getting corn, and I was unable to dispose of a single ear. This business of buying feeds was undertaken with the view to getting a local cooperative elevator started by showing what could be done. As things developed the responsibility all fell on me and I sustained a heavy financial loss and an endless amount of worry. I shall never assume such a responsibility again and I hope my experience will help other agents to avoid it."

766

: County Agent Section	:
: 9-10-'21	:
: No. 63-L.	:

*Web*